599

CHURCH UNION

AN INDIAN VIEW

20 JUN 1930

APPASAMY

476

Q6:68
N30
7458

[PRIN]TED FOR THE AUTHOR AT THE
[LIT]ERATURE SOCIETY'S PRESS, MADRAS

CHURCH UNION

AN INDIAN VIEW

BY

A. J. APPASAMY, M.A. (HARVARD), D.PHIL. (OXON.)
Author of *Christianity as Bhakti Mārga*
Joint-author of *The Sadhu* and
Editor of *Temple Bells*

PRINTED FOR THE AUTHOR AT THE
CHRISTIAN LITERATURE SOCIETY'S PRESS
MADRAS

Q6:68
N30

TAMIL NADU ARCHIVES LIBRARY
ACC. No. 7458
EGMORE, MADRAS-600 008

PREFACE

THESE three addresses were given to the Christo Samaj, Madras, the Missionary Conference, Kodaikanal, and the Indian Ministers' Conference, Madras. They were written out after delivery in the light of the discussions which followed. The first address has already appeared in the *Hindu,* and the second in the *National Christian Council Review* ; the third is appearing in the *United Church Herald.* They have been revised and brought together here in the hope that at this time they might reach a wider audience. As the addresses were given to different audiences, there is some overlapping of material. I am grateful to the Bishop of Madras of the Anglican Church, Rev. C. H. Monahan of the Wesleyan Church and Dr. J. J. Banninga of the South India United Church—all members of the Joint Committee—for reading the manuscript and helping me with their criticism. I must, however, say that I take the entire responsibility for the views expressed here.

It has been contended that the Union should be a deeply spiritual one. As I point out in the course of the pamphlet, that is the very ideal for which the Scheme strives. No one maintains that the regulations embodied in the Scheme are the end and aim of Union. They are only the basis on which the spiritual life of the Church is to be lived. The spiritual life of the Church involves all kinds of practical questions of organization and discipline. These questions are dealt with in the Scheme from the point of view mainly of Christian history and experience, and the hope is expressed that in course of time the Indian Church will be led to formulate her own answers to

these questions. Obviously we cannot scrap all Churches and begin anew. The Churches now existing will in course of time receive in India their local expression. As Indian Christians we have a double heritage. There is the heritage of the Christian Church, and the heritage of our country and its religious life. This Scheme is an attempt to embody for use in India the heritage of Christian Church. In course of time this heritage will be added to richly by the Indian contribution.

PALLAVARAM. S. I. Ry. A. J. APPASAMY.

INDIA.

CONTENTS

		Page
I.	The Basis of Union	1
II.	The Ministry of the Church ...	15
III.	The Spirit of Unity	27

Office of the Registrar ... Madras
20 JUN 1930

I THE BASIS OF UNION

The question of Church Union in South India is being earnestly discussed all over the Christian world. After ten years of prayerful toil a Committee of representatives from the Anglican, Wesleyan, and South India United Churches have drawn up a *Proposed Scheme of Union** and its value is being questioned from a great many sides. There is a considerable amount of misunderstanding about the provisions of the Scheme and several people have not grasped the fundamental principles underlying it. It is necessary that serious efforts should be made to set forth the real implications of the Scheme. This paper is one such effort.

I

Certain fundamental principles may be laid down first. These may seem to be elementary truths, but unless agreement is reached on them, no agreement of any far-reaching character is possible.

The first principle is that religion is fully experienced only when it is corporate. While it is quite true that the ultimate and deep experiences of religion take place in the inner depths of a man's being, these experiences are not complete until they are shared by others. There may be effective worship in private, but that is not all the worship there is. Worship in order to reach all its full possibilities must be practised in the company of our fellowmen. A man may speak of loving God fully, and yet if this love does not reach

* Published by the Christian Literature Society, Madras, and the S.P.C.K., London.

beyond himself to others, it is of no value. Religion in its sweep includes God, man and the other-man. In worship and service, in prayer and work, in contemplation and activity, every man must, if he is to realize all the wonder and love of God, associate himself with others who are likewise seeking to tread the same path. It is only in the company of fellow-pilgrims that our journey to the Heavenly City is accomplished, with a song on our lips and a rhythm in our spiritual movements.

The second principle is that this recognition of the importance of corporate religion naturally and logically leads on to a recognition of the value of organization. If people are to worship together there must be certain methods of worship; congregations will be led in course of time to formulate certain forms of service as most helpful to them. Men will be needed to conduct these services and they would have to be trained and equipped so as to fulfil the various duties expected of them. Such men will have to obey certain rules and to abide under certain disciplines. There will be others to supervise and control their work. All these mean organization. In some Churches there is more organization and in some Churches there is less. But in all bodies of believers there is organization of some sort or degree. Even the Quakers, who are opposed to all Church appurtenances and seek their guidance in the inner light, have been led to publish a *Book of Christian Discipline* in two parts.* Is there not plenty of organization in Hinduism? Are there not rules and disciplines among the Hindus?

The third important truth is that God manifests Himself in history. A new body of Christians do not begin all afresh. They have a mass of Christian ex-

* The Friends' Bookshop, London.

perience and practice to draw from. God has been at work all through the ages and Christians who are seeking ways of effective worship must draw from these vast evidences of His bounty and goodness and of His contact with men all down the centuries. With infinite compassion He has revealed Himself to men and this revelation has been written down. No one who has a longing to realize God must fail to avail himself of this revelation. God is God of the past as well as of the present. We not merely live with Him now, but we have to remember that others have lived with Him in the past, and that their experience is of great help and inspiration to us.

A word or two is necessary here about the place of history in religious experience. A practice is not valuable simply because it is ancient. If this were so, the caste system would be weighty on account of its antiquity. As in other fields the contribution of history to the religious experience of man should be sifted. There are a great many matters of no importance to which men have clung firmly for long stretches of time. They have certainly to be given up. In spite of this, history has a definite use. God operates in space and time, and history is the record of His work in this world. We believe in the Incarnation. In fact, that is the solid ground of all our religious experience. A belief in the Incarnation rests primarily on the thought that God appears in time. It is because we thus attach importance to the happenings in time that we study the history of religion and seek to enrich our spiritual life with truths which have become clear in the course of religious history. Some Christians in India emphasise the value to Christianity of Indian religious thought. Such emphasis is not due to nationalism. If it were, it would be of no great value. But it is due to the conviction that God has led

men in the past in India and has taught them certain profound truths. This conviction should be consistently extended so as to include also the value of Christian history and thought.

These then are the three fundamental principles, though not all of the same degree of importance, which lie at the root of religion. Religion is complete only when it is corporate, organized and historical. If any of these elements are lacking in religion a man's experience of God does not reach all its real glow and beauty. If a man seeks to realize God all by himself, cutting himself off from others, and taking no account of the revelation of God in human history, we dare not say that God will not give a glimpse to him if he is humble and trustful. But it is quite evident that his experience will not be as rich and full as that of the man who, in the company of other seekers after truth, draws from the infinite wealth of religion already available to mankind.

It is for this reason that the Christian Church is of very great importance. The Christian Church is composed of Christ's believers and in this living organism Christ indwells as a spirit animates a body. It is often said that the Christian Church has been a failure. Let us not close our eyes to facts. The story of the Christian Church is not always pleasant to read. Some of its pages are awful blots. In the name of Christ, worldlings have fought for power, truth has been persecuted, hypocrisy has passed off as saintliness, and ritualism has blighted life. Where love ought to have prevailed hatred has been rampant, and where humility ought to have reigned the lust for power has been supreme. Instead of the open mind, there has been a blind insistence upon authority. With shame and sorrow one has to confess all these failures and point them out with the same delicacy and

pain as one would recognize some particular weakness of a great soul whom one loves and reveres. After saying all this we must go on to say that the Christian Church has been the one institution where the followers of Christ have generally dwelt in peace and love. There has been no other environment which has been so congenial to the growth of the Christian spirit. Our hearts glow with enthusiasm as we read the inspiring lives of the saints—St. Augustine, St. Francis of Assisi, St. Teresa, Martin Luther, John Wesley, George Fox and all the others who so wonderfully caught and lived the spirit of the Master. The noble records of their life kindle in us new aspirations and enable us to go about our tasks in a new spirit. The books of piety and deep religious experience which have come down in the Christian Church help us to grow solidly in the Christian religion.

So far there will probably be general agreement among all the followers of Christ. Every Christian will agree that in the Christian Church religion is corporate, organized and historical and that individual Christians and bodies of Christian believers must, to attain the fulness of the Christian life, link themselves with the Christian Church. On this main issue there will probably be little difference of opinion.

II

Various doctrines, however, are held in the different branches of the Christian Church. Methods of worship are equally varied. Forms of Church government are also different. Because of these differences in doctrine, practice and Church government the different bodies of Christians are widely separated. Is it possible to reach a common mind with regard to these

diverse doctrines and practices so that these divisions would count no longer?

The Committee in South India, after a careful study of this problem and an investigation of the demands of the different Churches in the West, has set forth the following as absolutely essential:

'The Uniting Churches hold the faith which the Church has ever held in Jesus Christ, the Redeemer of mankind; and in accordance with the revelation of God which He made, being Himself God incarnate, they worship one God in Trinity and Trinity in Unity.

'They accept the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as containing all things necessary to salvation and as the ultimate standard of faith.

'They accept the Apostles' Creed and the Creed commonly called the Nicene, as witnessing to and safeguarding that faith, which is continuously confirmed in the spiritual experience of the Church of Christ, and as containing a sufficient statement thereof for a basis of Union.

'They believe that the Sacraments of Baptism and the Supper of the Lord, ordained by Christ Himself, are means of grace through which God works in us; and agree that they should be ministered with unfailing use of Christ's words of institution and of the elements ordained by Him.

'They believe that the Ministry is a gift of God through Christ to His Church; that God Himself calls men into the Ministry through His Holy Spirit, and that their vocation is to lead God's people in worship, prayer and praise, and through pastoral ministrations, the preaching of the Gospel and the administration of the Sacraments (all these made effective by faith) to assist men to receive the saving and sanctifying benefits of Christ and to fit them for service; and they believe that in ordination God, in answer to the

prayer of His Church, bestows on and assures to those whom He has called and His Church has accepted for any particular form of the Ministry a commission for it and the grace appropriate to it, which grace, if humbly used, will enable the ministers to perform the same. . . .

The uniting Churches, recognising that the episcopate, the councils of the presbyters and the congregation of the faithful must all have their appropriate places in the order of life of the united Church, accept in particular the historic episcopate in a constitutional form as part of their basis of union, without intending thereby to imply, or to express a judgment on, any theory concerning episcopacy.' *

The question has been often raised as to whether all these conditions are essential to Union. Is not the first condition alone enough? If all Christians believe in Christ, should they not all come together and enter into the deepest things of the Spirit in fellowship? It should be stated at once that the conditions laid down here are not all of the same degree of importance. The first, namely, the belief in Christ, stands all in a class by itself. It is the primal belief of all Christians. On it rests the whole structure of the Christian life. To suppose that it is on the same level as the other conditions mentioned is to do harm to the vitality of the Christian life. No belief in the Holy Scriptures, in the Creeds, in the Sacraments, in the Ministry and in the Episcopate can ever equal in importance and value the belief in Christ.

If the belief in Christ is the primal condition necessary, why is it necessary to refer to the others? By doing so, are we not confusing the essential with the non-essential? Are we not attaching undue importance to matters of no value? Is it not our duty as Christians

* *Proposed Scheme of Union*, pp. 3–4.

to focus all our attention upon the main issue, namely, our belief in Christ, and to be united on that basis without seeking agreement in further matters.

The divisions in the Christian Church which exist now are facts to be reckoned with. Every Christian of whatever Church believes in the supremacy of Christ. If he does not believe in the supremacy of Christ, he would by universal consent be regarded as being outside the Church. But this belief in Christ has given rise to certain questions. Who is Christ? How is He related to God? What were the main facts of His life on earth? What is the meaning of His death? What is the nature of the Church which He founded? Who is the Holy Spirit of whom He spoke? Anyone who believes in Christ and seeks to understand His wonderful life and teaching will come up against these questions sooner or later. These are inevitable questions. They have been asked again and again in the course of Christian history and they have been answered again and again. We find answers to these questions in the Holy Scriptures, the Old and the New Testaments, and therefore the Old and the New Testaments are absolutely necessary. It has been suggested that the New Testament is absolutely necessary but why the Old? Why should Christians in India be asked to become Jews before they become Christians or when they become Christians? The Old Testament is the Scripture of the Jews and to make its acceptance an essential condition for the Church in India is to drag in the Jewish religion along with the Christian. It is quite true that the Old Testament is not of the same importance as the New. But Christ Himself came from the Jewish background and His whole life and thought rests upon the foundation of the Old Testament. To understand Christ properly we must seek

to understand the Old Testament. The Scriptures of India have a great deal of value in them and they will help Christians in India to live deeply the spiritual life in Christ. But these Scriptures cannot take the place of the Old Testament; they can only supplement it.

The Holy Scriptures are extensive. How can we get at the heart of the Holy Scriptures? What are the main facts in the Scriptures which are absolutely essential for the Christian life? Among all the answers which have been given to these questions, there are two of outstanding importance and they are the Apostles' Creed and the Nicene Creed. These are statements of faith drawn up by saintly and thoughtful men and for centuries they have been used by the Christian Church as adequate statements. To-day these two Creeds are accepted as authoritative by great bodies of Christians and if any agreement is to be reached all over the Christian Church, these two Creeds would have to be accepted as absolutely necessary.

It has been said in India that these Creeds answer questions which primarily arose out of the Latin and Greek minds. We in India do not want to guide all our religious discussion along the lines of enquiry initiated by the European mind. The Hindu mind has its own keen approach to religious problems. Christianity in India must reckon with this approach and not with the European approach. We should, therefore, have Creeds answering the questions thrown out by the Hindu mind. To this the reply is clear. The Hindu mind has not so far gone deep into the fundamentals of the Christian Faith. This process of investigating the reality of the Christian Faith in the setting of India's religious thought cannot take place in a short period of time.

It would mean generations of earnest thinkers striving to understand the problems of life in prayer and work. Only after such a long process of meditation and life will a Creed, truly Christian and truly Indian, emerge. Until such a time comes we must use these historic Creeds of Christendom. Even if an Indian Creed is formulated we would do well to use the Apostles' Creed and the Nicene Creed so that we may be in fellowship with the Churches of the West. The unity of spiritual life gets tangible expression in the recital of a common Creed. There are few ways more effective of realizing our communion with the other great Christian Churches than by reciting Creeds common to them and us.

The worship of the Christian Church has developed enormously during the centuries. Among the practices followed the Sacraments of Baptism and the Supper of the Lord are of supreme value. They were ordained by Christ Himself. Their observance prevails over the greater portion of the Christian Church and no Union is possible without their observance.

Where there is a body of believers there is need for a Ministry and such a Ministry has also been given by God to the Church. In the course of Christian History three separate forms of Ministry have evolved—the Episcopal, the Presbyterian and the Congregational—and if Union is to be accomplished there must be room for all these three forms of the Ministry. At present different bodies have different forms of Ministry and different claims are made on behalf of these. The Episcopal form of Ministry is the most widely observed and is truly ancient and therefore it should be made the basis of Church life. It is not suggested that the acceptance of Episcopacy will bring in the millennium as some have said nor is Episcopacy being accepted as a measure of expediency. The main ob-

ject in the acceptance of Episcopacy is the acceptance of a historic and widely-prevalent institution.

In all these have we not strayed far from the essentials ? While it is true that Christians should unite on their belief in Christ, this has not actually been possible. Because of differences in practices and doctrines, men believing in the same Lord have been divided. It is, therefore, necessary to reach some agreement about these doctrines and practices if Union is to be attained. These doctrines and practices are not of the same degree of importance as the belief in Christ. But full fellowship between different Christians cannot be attained unless there is also a measure of unity in the Creeds which they hold, the Sacraments which they observe, the Scriptures which they take as authoritative and the Ministry which they follow. Two friends may work under the same leader and yet, whatever we may say, unless there is equality in intellectual and social status there is in most cases no complete fellowship between the two. It is when they come from the same social circle, have the same education, possess the same intellectual outlook and live in more or less the same way that the unity between the two becomes complete. Obviously their following the same leader is the fundamental thing; but their union is not complete unless in addition to this loyalty, there is agreement in their intellectual and social life.

III

A great many people are afraid that the freedom of the Indian Church will be hampered by the acceptance of these conditions. If the Indian Church is to grow rich in her Christian experience, she must think for herself and interpret in life and word the teaching of

the Lord. Bishop Gore fully acknowledges the value and importance of this necessity. 'The religion which actually won Europe and is called Christianity owed almost as much to the Greek as to the Jew; and if India is to call itself Christian, its Christianity, will, again, owe as much to India as to the Europe which evangelized it.' * This principle is accepted in the Scheme. 'The uniting Churches are agreed that in every effort to bring together divided members of Christ's Body into one organization, the final aim must be the union of all who acknowledge the name of Christ in the Universal Church, and that the test of all local schemes of union is that they should express locally the principle of the great catholic unity of the Body of Christ. Their desire, therefore, is so to organize the Church in South India that it shall give the Indian expression of the spirit, the thought and the life of the Church Universal.'†

It may be feared that the acceptance of the conditions laid down in the Scheme may hamper the freedom necessary for such growth. We have already accepted the general principle that the historic Catholic Church has great importance and that whatever is of value in the historic Catholic Church must be preserved in any new Church. The conditions laid down here are the absolute minimum. The Committee has taken full account of the objection and recognizes that the Church in India ought to be free to develop along her own lines. As the Scheme well puts it 'It is understood that it will be competent to the united Church to issue supplementary statements concerning the Faith for the guidance of its teachers and the edification of the faithful, provided that such statements be

* Charles Gore, *The Holy Spirit and the Church*, p. 4.
† *Proposed Scheme of Union*, p. 2.

not contrary to the truths of our religion revealed in the Holy Scriptures.'*

But why this great hurry? Why should not the Indian Church wait some more time so as to develop along her own lines and then seek fellowship with the other Churches? Fifty years hence the position of the Church in India will be certainly different. She will have become more Indian, more related to the soil. Thanks to the work of courageous and independent thinkers like the members of the Christo Samaj, the movement for linking up Christianity with all that is vital and worthwhile in the religious life of the country is spreading rapidly. In a few years' time we would have attained a greater degree of Indianisation and the spiritual life of the Church will on that account be richer and fuller. If we seek Union with the ancient Churches of Christendom, then also they will hold to these essential conditions. While our position would have altered considerably, their position would not have altered for these conditions have been sifted and their value established in the course of a long history. We should still, if we are to be in fellowship with them, base ourselves on these fundamental principles and practices. Therefore it is best for us to accept these vital principles of the Christian religion at this early stage and to develop them in our own way in India.

For sometime the spiritual mission of India to the West has been emphasised by students of religion. The present Scheme of Union, begun in a humble way, has attracted wide attention. The measure of unity which has been attained thus far has been possible because of the genius of the people for tolerance and broadmindedness. This Scheme is not being imposed upon us from the outside. While many of the pro-

* *Proposed Scheme of Union*, p. 4.

visions in it have been worked into shape by the help of the Western friends who are now with us, the desire for such Union was originally Indian, all along Indian friends have speeded the Scheme on with the deepest sympathy, and it has ripened in the congenial atmosphere of religious tolerance for which India has always been noted.

Some of the controversies in the West may not have any meaning for us. But if we believe in the fundamental propositions laid down in the beginning of this address that Christianity, to be full experienced, must be experienced as a historical religion, we must, even if it needs a tremendous effort on our part, place ourselves in the long stream of historical tradition. The eyes of the Christian world are turned upon South India at this moment. A definite step forward here will mean an immense access of strength to all the movements for Church Union in different parts of the world. The failure of this Scheme here will in the same emphatic way put back the clock in several countries. It is therefore necessary for us to heed the working of the Spirit, who has awakened in our minds this vision of a new and a United Church, and to respond to it with our utmost devotion.

Q6:68
N30

II THE MINISTRY OF THE CHURCH

Forms of Christian doctrine and organization in India will depend upon a fresh interpretation of the teaching and practice of our Lord and of His apostles according to Indian aptitudes. The letter and spirit of the New Testament with regard to these matters would be explored once again in India, in relation to the great convictions which the people of India have held through the centuries. This is all as it should be. God has been preparing the people of India for the reception of the Gospel, and certain traditions and ideals have clearly emerged from the religious history of India. These ideals and traditions should be preserved in the United Indian Church.

Let us take for our special consideration in this paper the crucial question of the Ministry, for upon this hang a great many problems connected with Church Union.

I

There are some natural and clearly developed characteristics of the people which will determine, whether we will or no, the conception of the Ministry held in the Indian Church.

The first great conviction which has a bearing on this question is the reverence which men and women in India have always paid towards a guru, or religious teacher. A deeply spiritual person immediately commands the willing homage of men everywhere in this country. When people see a man of lofty spiritual attainments, they almost instinctively place themselves

under his influence. While practically everyone would speak in terms of the highest respect of such a man and be moved by his example, a few would directly place themselves under his instruction and take much pains to understand and follow his teaching. It is true, the guru tradition has developed certain undesirable phases. Sometimes a false kind of asceticism, or the outward appearance of a deeply religious life, may give a man the influence which only a genuinely religous man ought to exercise. Again, a guru may say that his teaching is secret and that only a select few are fit to receive it. Or he may impose upon his disciples a burden of service to himself which is not compatible with the highest ideals of selflessness. It is true that these undesirable phases of the guru tradition have frequently appeared, and still do appear. These extravagances apart, there is a profound truth behind the guru tradition which needs to be accepted. This profound truth is the emphatic recognition of the power of personality in religion. Religion is communicated by God-filled men. Books, however deeply spiritual, do not always possess the contagious power of personality. Codes and constitutions do not kindle the flame of living religion. As we survey Church History, how do we find the great advances in religion to have been made? How did striking transformations of Churches and of individuals take place? They were largely due to the irresistible influence of men filled with the grace of God and experiencing in their personal lives the power and the reality of the living God. Men, and not synods and councils, have been most instrumental in spreading the power of Christ in human lives.

There is another natural characteristic of the people of India which will have a bearing on this question of the Ministry. It is the emphasis on the value and

importance of spiritual descent. Where many examples may be given one must suffice. *The Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad* is an ancient document, which has been dated about 500 B. C. It is a short treatise, occupying in Dr. Hume's translation just a little over one hundred pages. Like the other *Upanishads* it is a compilation of doctrines set forth by different teachers, and is composed of three different strata. It is interesting to note that, at the end of each strata, there is a careful and extensive list tracing the spiritual ancestry of the doctrines expounded in them:

> 'Pautimashya (received this teaching) from Gaupavana,
> Gaupavana from Pautimashya,
> Pautimashya from Gaupavana,
> Gaupavana from Kausika,
> Kausika from Kaundinya,
> Kaundinya from Sandilya,'

and so forth.*

If we examine modern religious books in India, we shall find that in them, too, the line of tradition is carefully traced. The people of India have been regarded as lacking in the historic sense. But in this matter they certainly have shown a clear perception of the value of tradition. The belief underlying these lists of spiritual genealogy is that a body of doctrine, which has been passed on from generation to generation by teachers of known worth, is likely to be sound and pure. If it is known that certain gurus of acknowledged piety and learning have taught in succession a body of truths, such a body of truths may well be expected to be worthy of the confidence of men.

There is a third conviction which is evident in the religious history of India. It is the

* R. E. Hume, *The Thirteen Principal Upanishads*, pp. 105, 148, 174.

firm belief in the inter-relation of body and spirit. The body we understand, and its influence upon other bodies. We are also aware of the fact that the spirit acts upon other spirits by spiritual means. But there is a dim and misty region in which the body affects the spirit. This region has not yet been fully explored. The modern student of Western science is not inclined to believe in the existence of this middle zone, nor in the inexhaustible possibilities inherent in it. We in India have always believed that the possibilities of the spirit's interaction on the body are unlimited. I may be regarded as superstitious or credulous or unscientific, but I am rather inclined to say that, instead of denying the immense possibilities with regard to the interaction of body and spirit, it is far better to believe that these possibilities still await investigation by minds properly equipped for the task. Naturally, the kind of equipment required for the investigation is different from the training necessary in the physical sciences. But, provided men of innate gifts in this direction arise and explore this region, astonishing results will become known.

II

I have often been asked: Why should not the different Churches in India unite without any reference to union among the Churches in the West? Many of the controversies which have split the Church in the West have no meaning for Indians. Why, then, should not the people of India come together and form a Union without taking into account the difficulties and prejudices and mistrusts of Western Christians? This cannot be done, for a most important reason. We in India are keen on having a United Indian Church.

Several of the factors which have brought about the various divisions of Christendom do not possess any meaning for us. It is easy for us to unite. But we do not want to form an Indian Church which will be unrelated to the great Churches of the West. The Indian Church must be able to hold spiritual fellowship with all the Christian communions throughout the world—with the Free Churches in Europe and America, with the Anglican Church, with the Eastern Church, and ultimately, when the day comes, with the Roman Church. The question of Reunion should not be decided as if only India is to be considered. The Indian Church must become a vital member of the whole Christian organism. The arteries which flow through the body should also flow through this member. Life must pass from the other Churches the world over to the Indian Church, and from the Indian Church to the other Churches the world over.

This connection is necessary for the sake of the Indian Church. We are yet a young Church, and we would appropriate the spiritual heritage which has been accumulated in the Christian Church. It is not as if Christianity were being lived for the first time in India. The Christian religion has been taught and practised now for twenty centuries, and the valuable gains of such a continued process of experimentation and discovery are now available in the historic Churches of the West. The Indian Church should, therefore, establish a living connection with the Churches of the West.

This connection is further necessary for the sake of the Christian Church as a whole. Already men of breadth and vision in the West are looking towards the East for fresh glimpses of the mind of the Master. Ancient countries, like China, Japan, Persia, Arabia and India, have their own cultures and the people liv-

ing in them their own peculiar genius. When Christianity becomes a reality in these lands, it will receive new and fresh interpretations. The ancient races of the East will lay on the altar of their Christian life the treasures which they have acquired during their hoary past. With fresh accents and in new tones they will proclaim to a listening world the message of the living Lord. Coming as it does from personal religious experience lived in a new environment and bearing the marks of a different culture, this insistence upon the reality of Christ will carry conviction to the older Chrstians, who may have lost something of the freshness and power of a new understanding of Christ.

It may be thought that to attempt a form of Church organization in India, which will at once satisfy the best spiritual instincts of the people and the noblest traditions of the Christian Church, is most difficult, perhaps impossible. The *Proposed Scheme for Union* may well be regarded as pointing a way out of this forest of difficulties. This Scheme will be placed before the different Churches concerned and the prospects of its acceptance are most hopeful. According to this Scheme, Bishops are to be appointed and entrusted with large responsibilities. This is in line with the Indian guru tradition. I have already pointed out that it is natural for an Indian to place implicit trust and confidence in men of large spiritual gifts, and that this characteristic of the people contains a large and valuable measure of truth that, after all that is said and done, personality is the most effective factor in living religion. Through the grace of God, there are some men who are largely endowed, and their counsel and help will be sought in the new United Church of South India. I believe that, with their instinctive response to the appeal of deeply spiritual personalities, the people will readily accept and profit by a form of

church government in which such a large place is assigned to men of spiritual power.

Further, in the consecration of every new Bishop three Bishops are to take part. This regulation is with a view to indicate the significant fact that the new Bishop is, during the act of consecration, linked up with the large body of bishops all over the world now, as well as with the Bishops who have exercised their ministry all the way through Church history. We have already seen that the value of religious tradition is recognized in India, and that a book or system of doctrine is regarded with a great deal of respect if it can be traced through a line of teachers of acknowledged piety and learning. The episcopate is an historic institution in the Christian Church. It is the form of ecclesiastical polity which has had the largest influence and vogue in the Christian Church, and several of the older Churches still have their Bishops. The line of Bishops has been a long and distinguished one. It will satisfy one of the finest instincts of the people of India to realise that their Bishops are carrying on such an historic and important tradition.

Again, in the new United Church of South India, there is to be the laying on of hands in the consecration of the bishops and in the ordination of her other ministers. We believe, as I have already pointed out, in the intimate connection of the body and the spirit. I think the people will accept readily this ancient custom of the Church, and put into it their own deep belief in the inexhaustible possibilities of the interaction between body and spirit.

We may also well hope that the United Church of South India, possessing a constitution like the one proposed, will be welcomed, into close fellowship by the older Churches of the West.

The Free Churches of Europe and America will

probably welcome the new United Church of South India, as, according to the Scheme the new United Church will accept not only the episcopal element, but also the presbyterian and congregational elements. At the World Conference on Faith and Order, which met in Lausanne in August, 1927, it was realized that Re-union implies such an acceptance of episcopal, congregational and presbyterian systems of government. 'In view of (1) the place which the episcopate, the councils of presbyters, and the congregation of the faithful, respectively, had in the constitution of the early Church; and (2) the fact that episcopal, presbyterial and congregational systems of government are each to-day, and have been for centuries, accepted by great communions in Christendom; and (3) the fact that episcopal, presbyterial and congregational systems are each believed by many to be essential to the good order of the Church—we therefore recognize that these several elements must all, under conditions which require further study, have an appropriate place in the order of life of a Re-united Church, and that each separate communion, recalling the abundant blessing of God vouchsafed to its ministry in the past, should gladly bring to the common life of the United Church its own spiritual treasures.' This resolution, passed by such a representative gathering of delegates from the different Churches throughout the world, fills us with the hope that the United Church of South India will be welcomed as a sister Church, as after the union the ministry of the United Church will be on an episcopal basis and in the line of succession. Already negotiations between the Anglican Church and the Eastern Churches are proceeding, and the Eastern Church may extend the same hand of fellowship to the future United Church of South India. Union with Rome seems terribly remote and distant, but when the

time comes the United Church of South India, with her acceptance of the historic episcopacy, may be welcomed by the Roman Church.

III

The friends from the Free Churches, who are working in large numbers in South India as missionaries, question the wisdom of forming a United Church in South India on the basis of the historic episcopate. They value freedom as of the highest importance. With their knowledge of the struggle for religious liberty so valiantly fought for by their forefathers, they do not want to accept in India any form of organization which will cripple freedom of thought, worship and government. They realize that they have won their freedom with a great price, and they are unwilling to give it up by assenting to a form of organization which seeks to be in line with the historic tradition, from the thraldom of which they themselves have escaped. While it may be possible to realize the motives behind this plea for freedom so vigorously put forth by the missionaries of the Free Churches, it must be pointed out that the religious life needs, for its adequate realisation, 'two poles,' to use a favourite expression of Baron von Hügel, tradition and freedom. Where either pole is lacking the religious life becomes woefully inadequate. Before the Reformation, tradition was unduly emphasised and the result was the deplorable condition of spiritual life which called forth the fire and energy of Martin Luther and the other reformers. After the Reformation, freedom has been emphasised so much that we have at present the numerous and unhappy divisions of the Christian Church. If tradition has its dangers freedom has also its dangers, as may be well realised by a survey of the

numerous Christian bodies who insist upon their right to freedom in thought and worship, and are unwilling to submit to any central tradition. Even the most vigorous Congregationalist in America is, however, proud that in his religious life and in that of his church is preserved all that is significant in the Puritan tradition. In New England, where the insistence on freedom in worship and thought is emphatic, the life of the people still retains some of the finest elements in the Puritan tradition.

We, in India, should seek a form of Church organization which will allow due importance to freedom as well as tradition. There must be plenty of liberty in the Indian Church for freedom to think and worship, and the present Scheme allows such freedom. This freedom is particularly necessary, as the Indian Church has to work out a fresh interpretation of the Master's mind in relation to the age-long ideals and traditions of India. How can this be done unless there is freedom ? At the same time, the roots of our religious life must reach deep down into the New Testament through the different strata of Church history. The historic Churches of the West have made some blunders, and even these have meaning for the newer Churches which are springing into existence in the East. Christ is not touching men's hearts for the first time in our country. In different ages and in different countries Christ has been supreme, and the results of His reign in the hearts of men tell a story of astonishing significance. With all our anxiety to read afresh the New Testament in the light of our national history and culture, we must be ready to see that such a reading cannot but receive a powerful impulse and a corrective stimulus from the heritage of the historic Church.

As the scheme well puts it: 'The uniting

Churches agree that the United Church should of right be free in all spiritual matters from the direction or interposition of any civil government.

'They further agree that the United Church must be an autonomous Church and free from any control, legal or otherwise, of any Church or Society external to itself. At the same time they remember that the United Church, on account of its origin and history, must have special relations with the Churches in the West through which it has come into existence, and will regulate its acts by the necessity of maintaining fellowship with other branches of the Catholic Church, with which the Uniting Churches are now in communion.

'They also recognize that the United Church, as a part of the Church Universal, must give full weight to the pronouncement of bodies representative of the whole Church, and in particular, would desire to take part in the deliberations and decisions of an Ecumenical Council, if such should, in the mercy of God, be someday called together.' *

I should like to close with a frank appeal. We welcome any help which you are able to give us in this matter. You represent the older Churches, with their varying traditions and doctrines, and you understand under what conditions the Indian Church may hope to be in communion with these older Churches. Any guidance and counsel you are able to give us in this matter is therefore most helpful. But at the same time I must say, that unless you are able to consider this question of Re-union in a spirit of large tolerance, ready to see the value of distinguishing the essential from the unessential, you may make Re-union in India impossible. It will be a great misfortune if,

* *Proposed Scheme of Union*, p. 7.

7458

when we in India desire Re-union and are willing to come together, you decide to stand in the way of such a Re-union. However legitimate your suspicions and mistrusts may be, they do not count with us here, and we are prepared to pioneer as a United Church. May I say emphatically, that if you are not prepared to see the value in other people's beliefs and practices and to pool together your spiritual resources, the sooner you withdraw from these negotiations the better.

III THE SPIRIT OF UNITY

We should make clear to ourselves what the spirit of unity is in which negotiations for Church Union should be carried on. A great deal hangs upon this spirit. As to whether our negotiations will lead to a practical outcome or not will depend upon how successfully we work in the spirit of unity.

I

The first note of this spirit of unity should be *loyalty*. Everyone should realize fully and clearly what his own individual experience and the teaching of his Church really stand for and hold on definitely to such values. We deplore the many divisions in the Christian Church and rightly so. Each Church has, however, fought for some great principle. This principle should be preserved in any United Church that might come into existence. We should not enter Union negotiations in a spirit of compromise: For compromise always moves on a lower plane of adjustment and concession. Our aim, on the other hand, should be to reach a rich and living synthesis of all the values that count in the different Christian Churches. Obviously when these values conflict, some would have to be eliminated and others accepted, but the process must be the organic and living process of assimilation which draws into itself all that nourishes and rejects all that is useless and not a matter of barter and bargain. The *Proposed Scheme of Union* is drawn up on the understanding that each of the three negotiating

Churches has something of real value to the United Church of the future. The three Churches at present negotiating are not asked to give up their distinctive contribution or to lose their particular character but are asked to bring to the total life of the United Church their unique and individual characteristics.

There is an important principle which underlies Congregationalism. It is that every congregation with its pastor is a living unit. Its life as a corporate group is of vital importance. There is a coherence and solidarity about such a group and the common religious experiences and convictions of this group are of profound value.

This principle is to be incorporated into the United Church. As the *Proposed Scheme* put it, 'Subject only to the provisions of this institution, and to any special regulations thereunder which may hereafter be issued by the Synod, every pastor and congregation of the Church shall have full freedom in determining the form of worship to be used on any occasion.' * This is of particular importance for the new Indian Church. As has been pointed out in varying degrees of emphasis, the Indian Church has not yet adjusted itself in a process of living growth to its environment. The theology, the worship, and the organization of the Indian Church have yet to become thoroughly indigenous. Only when such an indigenous Church comes into existence can Christianity become wholly effective. This provision that every congregation is a living unit and will have considerable powers of decision about the worship and doctrine given to it will enable a great deal of experimentation to be carried on. Just at this stage in the growth of the Indian Church there must be room for plenty of free-

* *Proposed Scheme of Union*, p. 35.

dom in formulation of idea and practice and the provision in the Scheme will provide ample opportunities for small groups such as individual congregations to reach effective methods of worship and thought. What has proved helpful in small circles will then spread to wider areas.

The Wesleyans have in the course of their rich history realized the value of the laity. In a special sense the Wesleyans have taught and practised in their Church life the doctrine that every Christian has a vital function to fulfil in the life of the Church. The *Proposed Scheme of Union* has made it clear that in the new Church there is to be a full recognition of the importance and work of the laity. In the words of the *Proposed Scheme of Union,* 'To the whole Church and to every member of it belongs the duty and privilege of spreading the good news of the Kingdom of God and the message of salvation through Jesus Christ. It is one of the main functions of the ordained ministry to prepare the members of the Church to take their part both in the worship of God and in the service of man. The Presbyter in charge of a pastorate should therefore welcome, and, so far as lies in his power, provide for the exercise by lay persons of such gifts of prophecy, evangelism, teaching and healing as God bestows upon them. The institution of the diaconate is not intended to limit the sphere of service of the laity in any way, but to meet special needs that cannot otherwise be met.' * Here again the provision is wise. The Church in India is young and no hoary spiritual traditions of her own have yet been established. The Ministry has not yet begun to attract her best men, men of lofty spiritual and intellectual attainments. In the short list of the distinguished sons of

* *Proposed Scheme of Union*, p. 26.

the Indian Church, most are laymen such as Sadhu Sundar Singh, N. V. Tilak, H. A. Krishna Pillai, K. C. Banurji and others. Moreover, the response to spiritual appeal is widespread and there will be many men and women in every congregation who will catch the flame of the Master's passion and seek humbly to walk in His footsteps. All the available resources should be drawn upon, seeing that the task of bringing the Kingdom of God to India is so vast and stupendous. Every possible man with the willingness to serve must be stirred and challenged to do his best.

The Anglicans, along with such historic Churches as the Roman and the Eastern Orthodox Churches, have recognized the value of the historic episcopate. In these great Churches the episcopate has been the source of much of the Church's life. From it have proceeded many divergent and full streams of Christian activity. This episcopate is to be introduced into the New United Church. 'The meaning in which the uniting Churches thus accept a historic and constitutional episcopacy is that in the United Church : (1) the bishops shall perform their functions in accordance with the customs of the Church, those functions being named and defined in the written constitution of the United Church ; (2) the bishops shall be elected, both the diocese concerned in each particular case and the authorities of the United Church as a whole having an effective voice in their appointment; (3) continuity with the historic episcopate shall both initially and thereafter be effectively maintained, it being understood that no particular interpretation of the fact of the historic episcopate is thereby implied or shall be demanded from any minister or member of the united Church ; and (4) every ordination of presbyters shall be performed by the laying on of hands of the bishop and presbyters, and all consecrations of bishops shall

be performed by bishops, not less than three taking part in each consecration.' *

It is a pity that many do not yet realize the comprehensive character of the synthesis which the proposed Scheme aims at. The introduction of the historic episcopate has roused a great deal of controversy and it looks as if the whole Scheme is an attempt to meet the Anglicans. No member of the negotiating Committee would, as I understand the situation, accept this idea. The Joint Committee has definitely set out for reaching a comprehensive assimilation of the highest values in the different Churches. This should be fully borne in mind. When people come to understand clearly how the proposed Scheme strives to obtain such a full and wide synthesis, some of the opposition to it will certainly disappear.

II

The second note is that of *tolerance*. When we say that each Christian is to be loyal to his Church, probably most of us will say that that is easy enough. Each one is brought up in a particular environment and on a definite set of principles. To be told that we should realize what is of genuine value in this environment and that we should hold to it firmly is in line with our deepest instincts. The spirit of loyalty is probably inherent in most of us. But the danger so often is that this loyalty degenerates into narrow-mindedness, bigotry and fanaticism. Loyalty itself is one of the finest traits of human character. But loyalty practised in a wrong way and in a bad spirit has been at the bottom of much bitterness and rancour. It is because men have not merely been loyal but have carried their loyalty to the limit of obstinacy and stub-

* *Proposed Scheme of Union*, pp. 4–5.

bornness, extolling what they have and closing their eyes to what others have, that we have so many troubles in the religious world. By all means let us be loyal. But this loyalty should be combined with tolerance. We should see what others have to contribute just as readily as we are willing to see what we ourselves can give. To see the value in our doctrine and experience and plead for it enthusiastically is quite easy. Any discussion on Church Union calls forth an enormous amount of heart-felt and genuine appreciation by each man of his own Church. But if the same spirit could be extended to the other Churches and the truths of genuine value inherent in them could be recognized, we should be well on the road to Union.

Two types of opposition have emerged to the proposed Scheme. The one type of opposition comes from those who follow what may be called the Priestly Ministry and the other from those who follow what may be called the Prophetic Ministry. Dr. N. P. Williams, Lady Margaret Professor of Divinity in the University of Oxford, points out in his book *Lausanne, Lambeth and South India* that St. Paul speaks of the Church being built upon the foundation of Apostles and Prophets. Both are equally necessary. We cannot dispense with either the Apostles or the Prophets.*

The Scheme has come in for a good deal of criticism from Anglo-Catholic scholars. They represent the Priestly Ministry. With deep conviction they point out that the Church and the Ministry is to be traced to the Lord and His Apostles and that all our modern practices and doctrines should be grounded in

* *Lausanne, Lambeth and South India*, p. 17. See Ephesians, iv. 11.

history. They love to trace back through the ages the guiding hand of God and they seek a form of Ministry which has the sanction of the ages. If only they would recognize the function and power of the Prophetic Ministry, negotiations would be much easier.

At the other extreme, there are those who follow the Prophetic Ministry and believe that God is ever meeting man, meets him now as fully as in days of old. God is not confined to the past. It is not necessary to use forms because they are old and historic. In the goodness of God, man, under the quickening influence of His Spirit, may evolve new moulds of thought and life. It is not necessary for a full religious life to go back to the past. Historic creeds are of no great value. With ever-widening knowledge our ideas are changing and our doctrines are becoming different. To recite old and historic creeds is to lay aside our quest for a new formulation of Christian knowledge or to recite them with mental reservations. Either alternative is bad for us.

This is the point of view which is being put forward by some Congregationalists and by the Christo Samaj in Madras. The attitude of the Christo Samaj is of considerable importance for the Indian Church. It is a small group of devout and liberal thinkers who have set out to incorporate in Christianity all the abiding values in the religious culture of our land. Though small, this group has already exerted considerable influence and represents a point of view which will become more and more important as the years go by. The Christo Samaj stands out definitely for what is called the Prophetic Ministry. Even Dr. Williams who makes such a strong plea for the Catholic point of view realises that 'an Episcopalian Church which possessed no Prophets of any kind

would be an incomplete Church.' * The Christo Samaj does well to call our attention away from the externals to the inner core of religion. There is always a danger that organization and ritual may kill real religion. As long as the Prophets keep this great idea alive in the hearts and minds of people, they are doing a great service.

Perhaps it is just as well at this stage to realize that even in India there have been some strains of non-ecclesiastical religion. In Sankara's school the man who has attained the final knowledge that he is one with Divine need not worship any longer. He is above all prayer and ceremony and has no relation to any of the outward rites of religion. Also it is recognized that when a devotee becomes absorbed in prayer he need not, so long as he remains thus absorbed, attend to any of the duties connected with worship at home or in the temple. The ideal for which many devotees strive is the ideal of such absorption. The man who aspires to remain rapt in such prayer for days or months may betake himself to some solitary spot and is not expected to participate in the various sacraments and ceremonies which are enjoined upon devotees.

But a Hindu himself recognizes that the influence of mystics outside the Church is not as great as those who continue to work in the bosom of the Church. ' St. Augustine, St. Francis, the German mystics of the fourteenth century, St. Catherine and St. Teresa lived and worked within the Church infusing light and life into its traditional formulae. Therefore their influence was more abiding than that of the independent mystics—as Blake in England, or Emerson in America. In our own country we find the influence of the author of the *Bhagavad Gita,* who is a mystic of the Church, has been more lasting than that of the

* *Lausanne, Lambeth and South India*, p. 29.

Buddha who set himself up as an independent teacher.' *

There is one particular direction in which the exponents of the Priestly idea as well as the exponents of the Prophetic idea have to exercise tolerance: and that is with regard to the theory of the Ministry. Controversies have raged in the Christian Church around the origin of the Christian Ministry and as little agreement is likely to be reached among the different Churches on this point, the Joint Committee has recommended that the historic episcopate be accepted in the United Church without any theory of the Ministry being implied or enforced. The underlying principle is that it is possible to detach fact from theory. There is the fact of the historic episcopate. This institution is necessary for the United Indian Church if she is to hold fellowship with the other great Churches of the West, and if she is also to develop along her own lines. The exponents of the Priestly Ministry are anxious that their theory of the historic episcopate should also be made a part of the negotiations. They believe that Christ appointed the twelve Apostles and gave them special grace to carry on their Ministry, and that this special grace has been conveyed from generation to generation by the laying on of hands. The present Bishops in the historic Churches have thus obtained a special grace and are able to communicate it to ministers; the ordination of only such episcopally ordained ministers is valid. The exponents of the Prophetic Ministry have declared that no such connection with the past is necessary but that God gives His grace to those whom He calls as He wills. To insist on any particular theory of the Ministry would be to insist upon the shadow. The representatives of the Free Churches, in accepting the historic

* D. S. Sarma, *The Gita and Spiritual Life*, p. 31.

episcopate, have accepted a practice of abiding value and they need not be at pains to eliminate any particular theory about this episcopate which some Anglicans may hold. In the same way the exponents of the Priestly Ministry need not insist that along with the historic episcopate their own priestly interpretation should be accepted. Where substantial agreement has been reached on an important matter by the acceptance of a practice, it is to chase the shadow to seek for any further agreement as to the theory behind it. A fact is a fact and those who are anxious to uphold one theory or another should practise the Christian virtue of tolerance towards each other.

III

The third note in the spirit of unity should be the note of *penitence*. We talk often enough about the divisions in the Christian Church and the shame and dishonour which has come to Christ on that account. But this fact has not really sunk deep into our souls. We have not really been filled with the sense of the utter shame and wickedness of disunion among the followers of the same loving Lord. This movement for Church Union would make remarkable progress if it were conducted not on the level of debate and controversy but on the level of repentance and grief. If only every Conference on Church Union were preceded by long periods of soul-searching meditation in which we could dwell on the harm that has been done to the Christian Church by her divisions, there would be a different outcome. In addition to our papers and conferences on Church Union, there should be litanies of penitence said in every Church. And for people who are not helped by litanies, periods of individual or corporate worship should be arranged where the

main attention is focussed upon the grievous hurt which has been done to Christ and His Kingdom by our divisions. It has always been recognized that living religious experience, whether it comes as the joy of salvation or as fellowship with God, is based upon a deep going penitence. Christian evangelists have always taught that the burden of sin should be realized first and that, filled with remorse, we should throw ourselves at the feet of God who will give us pardon and peace. The mystics have pointed out that the first stage on the mystic way is purgation with its discipline and pain; only then comes illumination with its glory of light and union with its joy in the Lord. Even such an unorthodox writer as Middleton Murray points out that all living religious experience presupposes this. There should be a vivid and penetrating experience of sorrow, before a sense of unity is attained. 'The mystical experience supervenes upon a state of complete spiritual exhaustion. This condition of spiritual exhaustion is produced in the subject by a long-standing and continually increasing psychological tension which we may describe as discord between the Heart and the Mind. The object concerning which the Heart and Mind are in discord is the moral nature of the Universe.'* So this writer bears witness in his own way to the importance of a period of penitence.

IV

The last note of the spirit of unity is *hope*. We seem to be afraid of the ways in which the Scheme might work out. But if we believe, as we do, that the Scheme has been wrought into shape by the Spirit of God working in men's minds, we should have no diffi-

* J. Middleton Murray, *God*, p. 124.

culty in believing that the same Spirit will carry forward His plans to completion. The future is shrouded in mystery and there is in every human heart a fear of what the future may hold. We are so concerned as to how the plans set forth in the Scheme might turn out. Should it not be realized that we are in the hands of a living and loving God whose operations will ever go on? Such a firm belief will enable us to face the situation in a manly way.

It has been pointed out by some Indian critics that the Scheme has called forth no whiteheat enthusiasm. For a Union to be consummated effectively such a glow of fervour is absolutely necessary. But during all these months the Scheme has been before the public there has been no manifestation of such hearty approval and support. In reply to this it may be pointed out that in the first place the details of the Scheme are of no interest to most laymen who have neither the equipment nor the time to study such a document and to get enthusiastic over it. The *Proposed Scheme* is a more or less legal document, laying down rules and regulations and no legal treatise ever set anyone on fire. Can we not then get on without such a Scheme? Laws are needed everywhere, in the State as well as in the Church. The peace and security we enjoy as citizens is based on a series of carefully drawn up and elaborate laws. We cannot enjoy reading them as we enjoy reading a wonderful poem or a stirring biography. We may not even understand them. But we do nevertheless realize their great value. They are not, of course, everything. They should be ministered fairly and impartially.

Or to change the figure and to take an example from the human body, the Scheme is a kind of skeleton. Life cannot pulse through the body unless there is deeply embedded in its tissues a strong and

well-constructed skeleton. On the other hand, the skeleton is not everything. It cannot live nor can it have the beauty and grace of the human form. It must be clothed upon with flesh and blood. Living tissues of muscles and nerves must form around the skeleton until its original ugliness is hidden away. The Scheme is only the basis for the Church's life. A great deal will have to happen before there can be life in it, full and rich.

A good many people are afraid, for instance, of the power of the Bishops. In this age of democracy it is necessary to take all possible precaution to see to it that no one individual is allowed excessive control or direction. But we may well hope that in this land of rich spiritual tradition, gurus will arise who will exercise an enormous influence for good on the Church, not because they have been allowed extraordinary powers by this constitution but because they have spiritual power. It need not be supposed that a form of Church Government like the one proposed, with considerable opportunities for personal control and help, will necessarily be abused. There may be some men who may abuse such powers, and it is perhaps just as well to guard against such abuses. But the long religious history of India makes us hope rather that there will emerge a vigorous group of men who will themselves live in the closest relation to God and who, because of the atmosphere of prayer and peace which they carry about with them, will draw men by the gentle force of their saintliness to get near to God. Such a hope will make us look with different eyes on the *Proposed Scheme*, for then we will attach a new understanding to this provision that the basis of the Ministry should be the episcopate.

There is another question on which people are not clear in their minds. What is the object of Church

Union? Is it to bring together all the Protestant bodies in the hope that in course of time such a union will lead on to a Union with the Roman and the Eastern Orthodox Churches? the Eastern Orthodox Church is itself a mighty Church and includes between 146 to 150 millions of Christians in Greece, Russia, Serbia, Bulgaria, Roumania and other lands.* We know how vast and mighty the Roman Church is. The Eastern Orthodox Church has already begun negotiations with the Anglican Church. There is at present no prospect of reunion with Rome. But the question is, are we aiming at a Union of all Christians or are we trying to bring together all the Protestant Christians? In the latter case the question is rather simple. But if our ultimate goal is to bring together all the Churches, then the problem becomes exceedingly difficult. The Scheme definitely puts forward the ideal of complete Union. This aim is stated thus : 'It is the intention and the hope of the uniting Churches that all actions of the United Church will be regulated by the principle that it should maintain fellowship with all those branches of the Church of Christ with which the uniting Churches now severally enjoy such fellowship, and that it should constantly seek to widen and strengthen this fellowship and to work towards the goal of the full Union in one body of all parts of the Church of Christ.' †

The care and anxiety with which Anglo-Catholics are examining the Scheme is determined mostly by a desire to see to it that the Union at present contemplated in South India will not at a later stage stand in the way of a further Union with the Roman and Eastern Orthodox Churches. They are particularly anxious that such a full Union should be kept in view

* Stefan Lankov, *The Eastern Orthodox Church*, p. 19.

† *Proposed Scheme of Union*, p. 2.

N30

and that the negotiations at present carried on in India should help and not hinder its attainment. All those who desire a complete Union of all Christendom must for this reason feel grateful to the Anglo-Catholics, for the principle for which they are striving is a great and noble one. As to whether the difficulties and the dangers which they anticipate will occur is another matter.

The very name of Rome is anathema to some. In this address it is scarcely possible to deal with this great question. All that I can say is that whatever their faults may be, Christians in the Roman Church are followers of Christ, their influence in the world for good has been enormous, their life in God rich, and their roll of saints a long and illustrious one. The followers of Christ cannot think of Union leaving out altogether such a vast and influential body of Christians.

As we think of this problem of Union, thorny and manysided, a great hope takes hold of our hearts and a wonderful vision spreads before our eyes. We see, perhaps at some distant date but certainly sometime, all Christians of all Churches gathering together in complete fellowship. The different Churches retain their special values and have their characteristic religious life, but they all come together as one body. To the old historic Churches will be added also the new Churches of India, China, Japan and Persia, each bringing to the common life its special heritage. Then there will be no East and West, but all Christians will work and worship together, bond servants of the same Lord and heralds of the same Good News. They will share with each other their deepest religious experience in the holiest places, and thus refreshed, they will set forth to make the Kingdom of God a reality in the hearts of men.

7458

C. L. S. PRESS, MADRAS—1930